

Virginia Newsmen Vote Storm as Top '62 Story

RICHMOND, Dec. 26 (AP).—Newspaper and radio members of the Associated Press in Virginia have voted the fierce coastal storm of last March 7 as the top news story in the State during the past year.

Winds and tides during the Ash Wednesday storm caused seven deaths and damages in the millions of dollars to coastal Virginia, while other parts of the State were buried under a heavy snowfall that immobilized some areas.

The second biggest story of the year was the continuing racial dispute in Prince Edward County, where schools have been closed since 1959 to avoid court-ordered desegregation.

In third place was the combination story of the inauguration of Gov. Harrison and the battle in the General Assembly over the State income tax withholding plan.

The No. 4 story revolved around former Gov. J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., and his rift with Senator Harry F. Byrd, head of the dominant Democratic organization in Virginia. Although Mr. Almond's appointment by President Kennedy to the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals never got out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Almond was given a recess appointment to the bench.

Newsmen rated the November congressional elections as the fifth biggest story. Republicans held their seats in Congress in the 6th and 10th districts and narrowly missed upset victories in the 3d and 7th.

Other top stories of the year:

6. The double life of North Carolina Republican Chairman William Cobb, who was discovered to be maintaining homes and families in Roanoke and Charlotte, N. C.

7. The preparations and developments in Tidewater Virginia as a result of the Cuban crisis.

8. The exchange of U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers, son of a Southwest Virginia cobbler, for Russian spy Rudolf Abel and his return to this country.

9. The slaying of a Chestnut-

field County farmer, his wife and daughter by a 16-year-old problem child who was arrested the same day after a pursuit on the Blue Ridge parkway.

10. The fire in a Charlottesville rooming house in which seven died.

11. The furor over the revival of the drumming-out ceremony for dishonorably discharged Marines. The practice later was banned.

One story which apparently would have ranked near the top had it broken earlier in the year was the decision of a Federal court that declared Virginia's legislative redistricting acts of 1962 were unconstitutional. The United States Supreme Court later stayed the decision to allow an appeal.

A number of ballots in the top story voting already had been marked when the redistricting story broke. The story was ranked no lower than third on those ballots marked after it developed.